

2 copies  
Together

( : )

February 21, 1783.

ON THE  
PRELIMINARIES  
OF  
P E A C E.

Mr. HARTLEY.

**I** SHOULD not have risen in a debate which has been so fully discussed, if I had not felt myself irresistibly called upon by some expressions which have dropt from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who founded all his arguments in favour of those ministers who had negotiated the peace, upon a public declaration of the total inability of this country in every respect, naval, military and

and financial. He has told us, that our navy can scarcely float above water, that our total fund of recruits for the land service for the year 1783, does not exceed 3000 men; and officially he declares, from the Exchequer itself, that we are a bankrupt people. He likewise adds, what is worse than all these, that we are a faithless people; although the noble Lord who makes you the present motion, prefaces that motion by an unanimous declaration, that we will most inviolably adhere to the peace and support it; and that we will not even proceed one step in commenting upon it, until we have given public parliamentary faith never to depart, in the least degree, from the terms of it.

Away, says the honourable Gentleman, with such pretexts; you pretend offence with the Minister, but your view is to break the peace. Let me ask you, Sir, which argument tends the most to defeat the peace; to publish to all Europe (what, however, he cannot prove) that we are without a navy, without an army, without financial resources, and, withal, a faithless people; or to say, as we do, with arguments from facts, and a just view of our own situation, that we are in full and sufficient strength to repel any attack from our antient enemies, which his declaration of our total national debility might invite, and bring upon us? See likewise, Sir, how we are hemmed in on our part of the argument; for if we stand out to vindicate the faculties and resources of our country, we are then charged with mutiny, domestic discontent, against a peace inadequate to our situation; knowing no other choice left to us but to sit in silence, (which it is impossible to do) and to hear our country villified for inability in its national powers, and for ill faith.

I must tread through this dilemma as well as I can, upon the consciousness of acting from the convictions of truth and justice. This country has resources to defend its honour, and to repel every unjust insult from its enemies, but nevertheless we will never break the national plighted faith. I know it is a tender and delicate moment to press upon the inadequacy of the terms of peace, lest we should be construed to mean a renewal of the war; and for this reason, I have abstained from every argument on that subject.

But there is one article among the Provisional Articles with America, which until explained by the future conduct of ministers, remains with me a point of much anxiety. I mean, that the period implied in the seventh article for the removal of our forces from America, seems to be deferred until the final conclusion of the definitive treaty. I give this to you, Sir, as the great argument of my fear and suspicion; for nothing will induce me to give my consent to the continuance of our forces in America, for even one year, or any longer indefinite period, than what may



be necessary for their removal. I shall not, at this late hour, introduce the discussion of this new topic, but I shall defer it till some future questions which will hereafter come before us, respecting the troops in America.

In the mean time, I desire it may be remembered, that I enter this protest now; and if I find any obscurity in the conduct of Ministers upon this head, in the future questions relating to the number and disposition of our troops, I shall bring this point to a test, and give every resistance to it in my power. Upon the whole, Sir, I shall oppose any farther continuance of any British force in America. And having thus declared my sentiments upon this fundamental point, which would destroy the root of the late war, and having protested in favour of our public faith, in the observance of the terms of the treaties before us, I conclude simply with declaring, that I shall attend to this point of the removal of the British troops from America, in all future questions pertinent to it, which may come before the House.

